
Executive Director's Report September 2021

Public Library Construction Aid Program

Lauren Moore, Assistant Commissioner for Libraries and State Librarian, announced on September 15th that the NYS Library, in partnership with New York's 23 public library systems, awarded \$14 Million in State Aid for Library Construction funds for the FY2020-21 projects. Throughout the State, there were 135 projects. These awards are typically received earlier but were delayed due to COVID-19. A list of all of the FY2020-21 State Aid for Library Construction projects is posted on the [State Library's website](#). In Westchester, 16 projects were awarded funds to 15 libraries for a total award amount of \$714,310, which was slightly higher than the allocation of \$654,899 due to reallocation of unused funds from other Systems. However, this amount still could not meet the initial application award amounts requested; and we are grateful to the NYS legislature for adding back \$20 Million to this program for the FY2021-22 budget.

Trustee Training Opportunity

As mentioned at the WLS June Board Meeting and the Public Library Directors Association (PLDA) September Meeting, a trustee education series focused on the [Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State](#) is being offered this Fall. Co-authors Jerry Nichols and Rebekkah Smith Aldrich will be leading this fun and informative series. For each session, trustees are encouraged to read a chapter of the *Handbook* and to send questions to the authors [in advance](#). These questions will be addressed during one of the sessions, which are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, October 19, from 5:00-6:30pm: [Duties & Responsibilities](#) | [Register Here](#)
Tuesday, November 16, from 5:00-6:30pm: [Library Board Meetings](#) | [Register Here](#)
Tuesday, December 14, from 5:00-6:30pm: [Personnel](#) | [Register Here](#)

Program details can be found at <https://midhudson.org/trusteebookclub/>. Ron Kirsop, Pioneer Library System Executive Director, and Brian Hildreth, Southern Tier Library System Executive Director, will co-moderate the events. All trustees and library directors are welcome to attend and encouraged to support this worthwhile program. All sessions will also be recorded.

Cataloging Services

In July, Manager of Cataloging Services Douglas Wray and Cataloger Melissa Glazer completed the work of changing all "illegal alien" and "alien" subject headings in the WLS catalog, including all of the variations (e.g. "Children of illegal aliens—Personal narratives", "Women illegal aliens—United States—Drama", etc.). The new term is "noncitizens", as proposed by the Library of Congress (LC) in 2016. (The change was never actually implemented by LC, due to pressure

applied by members of the United States Congress.) In March, PLDA voted to support the change in the WLS catalog.

In addition to editing the bibliographic records in the catalog, Mr. Wray and Ms. Glazer edited the local authority file to ensure that a patron doing a browse search for the old terminology would be directed to the new. This is a project which has been undertaken by several libraries throughout the United States, independent of LC, and WLS Cataloging Services is proud to join them.

Mr. Wray initiated a data reclamation project with OCLC in late June. This will update OCLC's accounting of the WLS member libraries' holdings. Because interlibrary loan (ILL) goes through OCLC, this will aid the WLS ILL service, as outside libraries will no longer request materials which have been weeded from collections by WLS member libraries, and a great number of titles owned by WLS member libraries will be shown as available for the first time. Strengthening the lending side of WLS ILL raises our profile in the greater library community, as well as simply helping to get materials in the hands of more borrowers throughout the country. At the time of this report, Mr. Wray and Systems Librarian Lindsay Stratton were involved with supplying preliminary information to OCLC.

Throughout the summer, Mr. Wray and Ms. Stratton have been busy working with the vendors Ingram, Brodart and Baker & Taylor, and several member libraries, to advise them and help smooth the process of setting up new acquisition plans.

Executive Director Terry Kirchner and Mr. Wray met with Burchenal Green, President of the National Maritime Historical Society in Peekskill, NY, to explore the possibility of having WLS Cataloging Services catalog the Society's book collection. Jill Davis, Director of Hendrick Hudson Free Library, was also involved, as that library is a potential partner. Mr. Wray and Ms. Glazer cataloged a representative sample of the books, to help determine the scope of the work involved.

Ms. Glazer was accepted into the New York Library Association (NYLA) Developing Leaders Program, which is designed to help participants explore and strengthen their leadership skills during nine months (October to June). She is a very promising librarian who already possesses leadership qualities, and WLS Cataloging Services is delighted that she has been given this opportunity.

Digital Equity Projects

The summer has been busy implementing digital equity projects funded by Westchester Community Foundation. Special Projects Manager Joe Maurantonio and Project Assistant Dana Hysell Alongi continue to offer orientation and training on the personal Chromebook devices distributed to families at 14 Head Start Centers and to over 60 families currently residing at the Coachman Family Shelter in White Plains and Vernon Plaza in Mount Vernon. Head Start and the Department of Social Services/ Temporary Housing and Shelters, key partners in this project, and libraries in the corresponding communities are assisting us with identifying families in need of devices and with coordinating the project. We are extremely grateful to TD Bank for providing a team of Spanish speaking staff to assist with the orientation and training.

What happens at an orientation and training: Families are given a walk through on how to use the Chromebook and set up their email account and login. For most, computer skills are extremely limited. Basic navigation skills such as how to use a mouse and navigate email are

covered in the initial session. Everyone is issued a temporary library card and a "passport" z-card with information on WLS Outreach Services. In almost all cases, additional training is necessary – either by WLS at the site or at the library.

How residents are utilizing their Chromebooks:

- To access housing applications – including signing up for Section 8: Using their own Chromebook to access, complete and confirm housing application is probably one of the most impactful uses of a personal Chromebook for these residents. It is much easier to fill out these applications online. Previously residents either had to access a public computer or use their phone. This also simplifies sending application confirmations to their counselors via email.
- To access mental health and other health service appointments online – particularly important during COVID restrictions: Access through their own Chromebook allows for greater privacy and a stronger connection (versus a cell phone connection).
- To connect with job counselors – share job information and resumes for review: The ability to share attachments, such as their resume, is much easier with a Chromebook as well as completing job applications, which today are mostly online.

One hundred Chromebooks are now available for loan to patrons through WLS. This Digital Equity Project was funded through the Institute of Museums & Library Services (IMLS)/ NY CARES Act funds. To publicize the program, WLS set up a bilingual phone line that has been promoted widely through County agencies and member libraries. Patrons are then linked to their local library where they can borrow a Chromebook "kit" (Chromebook, Mouse, Power Cord, Resource Guide, and Carry Bag). Library staff receive training in check out, check in, clearing private info and the basics of use.

We continue conversations with member libraries, community partners, and funders to explore opportunities to promote digital literacy, community engagement and outreach. Attached is a Powerpoint presentation given at a recent METRO meeting.

Information Technology (IT)

The WLS IT Service Level Agreement (SLA) process was very active during the summer of 2021. The final version of the SLA was completed and presented to all libraries. WLS IT held multiple information sessions for library board members to review and provide feedback on the new SLA. A total of 24 individuals attended representing 14 libraries and 10 staff members and 2 trustees representing WLS. Each library has received a unique version of the SLA which covers their contracted services from WLS IT in 2022. The return date of the approved SLA is set for October 1, 2021.

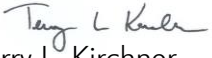
Enhancements to the current VDI environment are set to be launched this Fall and are expected to improve the overall user experience. Replacement of library workstations has taken place throughout the summer and the majority of Windows 7 computers have been replaced with new Windows 10 computers. The replacement process will continue through the Fall.

The wireless upgrade project has begun, but the lack of hardware availability has caused the conversion to go slower than expected. Even with the delays, WLS IT is working to have all

libraries who are continuing to use WLS IT as the wireless service provider for 2022 to be switched over by the end of Fall 2021.

The department has filled the vacant position of the second part-time Support Technician and is currently interviewing to fill the open post of IT Operations Manager.

Respectfully submitted,


Terry L. Kirchner
Executive Director



Digital Inclusion Initiatives

2020-2021

WLS' DEI goals are grounded in our overall mission to ensure that all those who live, work or go to school in Westchester have access to technology, resources and information they need to reach their full potential. Achieving these goals depend on collaboration with Outreach service partners, community-based organizations and a strong connection with our member libraries. Our role as a cooperative system is to promote community engagement and connection to communities in need. Our work during the 2020 Census Complete Count for Westchester – which highlighted the wide gap in access to devices and the internet helped to inform our efforts.

Community Collaborations and Funders

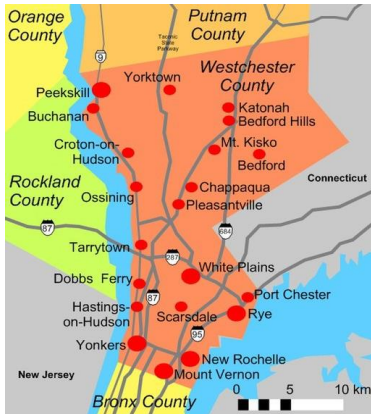
- Member Libraries
- STEM Alliance
- 14 Head Start Centers
- Westchester Shelters and Temporary Housing
- Feeding Westchester and community-based organizations



- RXR Realty
- Westchester Community Foundation
- IMLS/NY CARES Act Funding

Once the pandemic hit and library services pivoted to online – the digital gap grew wider. We surveyed the member libraries, talked to our Outreach Advisory Council and others working in this space to get a better sense of the need for devices, internet connection and training, particularly in Westchester's under resourced communities. DSS alerted us to the immense gap experienced by families in temporary housing and in shelters who could no longer take advantage of using public computers in libraries – making job and housing search, as well as connection to other services now available only online, nearly impossible. Head Starts struggled when they went virtual with approximately 700 families lacking a device, inadequate devices and/ in many cases no internet at all. With our connections to CBOs, social service agencies, and private funding we were able to help. In fact, private funding was critical – as it had been for our 2020 Census work; we leveraged those funding partnerships and identified new sources for funding.

Engaging Communities



- Buchanan
- Granite Springs
- Mount Kisco
- Mount Vernon
- New Rochelle
- Ossining
- Peekskill
- Port Chester
- White Plains
- Yorktown
- Yonkers


Empowering libraries. Empowering communities.

WESTCHESTERLIBRARIES.ORG
Email: outreach@wlslmail.org
Text: 914.732.5147
Phone: 914.231.3275

¿HABLA ESPAÑOL? ¡DESPLÉGALO!


Empowering libraries. Empowering communities.

Muchas bibliotecas tienen personal bilingüe y programación para adultos y niños. Los recursos incluyen libros, periódicos y revistas en español. ¡Aprende y disfruta con nosotros!

Overall, we have been able to reach nearly every corner of the County. As we distribute the devices, we provide users with training (English and Spanish), a temporary library card so they can access online tools immediately and a newly designed, 'Passport' (Z card) describing library outreach services.

<p>FIRSTFIND.ORG For adult learners</p> <p>Do you want to: be a better reader, get a high school diploma, apply for college, or help your kids with homework? Start at FIRSTFIND.ORG.</p>  <p>Information, interactive online learning, and one-to-one coaching is available.</p>	<p>FIRSTFIND.ORG For job seekers</p> <p>Our Toolkit can help with every step of your job search: be sure you are work-ready, know how to find and apply for the jobs you want, and make the best impression on an interview.</p>  <p>BONUS: You can meet with our Job Search Coach to get one-to-one guidance.</p>	<p>SENIORS.WESTCHESTERLIBRARIES.ORG For seniors and caregivers</p> <p>Medicare Questions? Senior Benefits? Get expert answers. Free.</p> <p>Westchester offers many resources, services, and benefits to its seniors. We're here to help you find and make sense of the information you need.</p> <p>VISIONLABS READING FOR A LIFETIME</p> <p>Our VisionLabs assist patrons with vision impairments and emerging vision loss. Discover how we can help keep you reading for a lifetime.</p> <p>SENIORLAWDAY.INFO We are a sponsor of the Senior Law Day Collaborative, a source for free legal and financial advice for seniors and caregivers in Westchester.</p>
<p>HEADING FOR COLLEGE? Find free practice exams and tips for picking and paying for college.</p>	<p>NEED TO BUILD YOUR COMPUTER SKILLS? Local libraries offer classes that cover the basics of computer use and beyond – including 3D printers and learning how to code. On FIRSTFIND.ORG, we link to online resources that teach everything from email to web design.</p>	
<p>TUTOR.COM/WESTCHESTER Studying? Use your library card for free online tutoring in any subject from kindergarten to college.</p>		

Here is a sample of outreach services included in the Z card... This pocket sized booklet expands to describe library-based services in Spanish and English, directing users to our firstfind.org portal. Promotion of the many library services these folks can take advantage of especially during this challenging time is an important goal.

WLS Service and Support



Device distribution, orientation, training, and technical support

WiFi subscriptions for those that needed them

Library staff training to assist patrons using Chromebooks

Train the trainer sessions for library staff

Digital training tutorials

Print documentation and support guides

Information and access postcard design and creation in English and Spanish

Distribution through mail and project sites to individuals in under resourced communities

Bilingual phone line to reserve and connect to local library

Our services and support include in addition to Chromebook ownership, a 12 month WiFi subscription if they need it, initial set up and training, printed support guides and ongoing technical support. Member libraries are supported with 100 loaner Chromebooks through our allocation from the IMLS/ NY CARES Act. We also offered on-going training to library staff to better assist patrons in using Chromebooks and accessing digital resources. On site training and orientation at Head Starts, libraries and shelters is greatly facilitated with the assistance of TD Bank Spanish speaking volunteers.

Equipment and Devices

- 100 Chromebooks for patron lending system-wide
- 200 Chromebooks with WiFi subscriptions distributed to 14 Head Start families
- 53 Chromebooks distributed to families in Westchester Shelters
- 100 refurbished and upgraded desktops to families in temporary housing and impacted by Hurricane Ida flooding in Mamaroneck



At this point our initiative touches over 300 families who have been given (or will be) given a Chromebook or a desktop. Joe Maurantonio, Special Projects Manager and Dana Hysell-Alongi visit outreach sites including member libraries for distribution and training; Loaner Chromebooks purchased with IMLS NY CARES funding are circulating, in addition to Chromebooks and WiFi that individual libraries have made available for their patrons. We have learned throughout this process that everything takes more time than we planned, technology skills are basic or non-existent, and training for library staff on the technology and patron engagement is critical. We continue to seek funds to support these initiatives and have submitted an Letter of Intent to NDIA for an Innovation project to focus on the digital literacy and access for our seniors to connect with healthcare and wellness services.